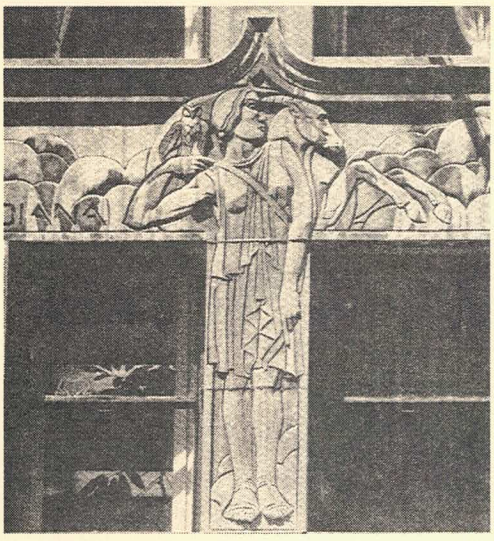
PRELIMINARY STAFF SUMMARY OF INFORMATION



McGraw-Hill Building

520 North Michigan Avenue

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS
MARCH 1, 1995

City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Valerie B. Jarrett, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The Commission makes its recommendation to the City Council after careful consideration. The process begins with an extensive staff study, summarized in this report, which discusses the historical and architectural background and significance of the proposed landmark.

The next step--a preliminary determination by the Commission that the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration--is important because it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission during the remainder of the designation process.

This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the Commission's recommendation to the City Council should be regarded as final.

COVER: The McGraw-Hill Building includes a wealth of decorative sculpture, including mythological figures at the fourth and fifth floors, such as the huntress Diana (top left) and the bull Taurus (bottom, left).

McGraw-Hill Building
520 N. Michigan Ave.

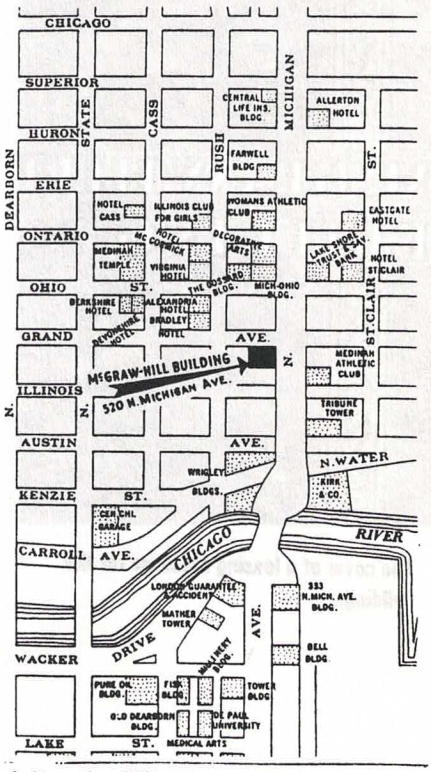
Date: 1928-29
Architect: Thielbar and Fugard

Many of the qualities associated with contemporary North Michigan Avenue were created in the decade that immediately followed the opening of the Chicago River Bridge in 1920, and preceded the 1929 stock market crash. Development of the street was rapid, as 31 major buildings were built or remodeled during this period along the newly widened North Michigan Avenue.

Unlike other city streets, which had generally developed without a clear vision, the image for North Michigan Avenue was shaped by a series of plans prepared by architects and property owners in 1909 (Burnham/Bennett) and 1918 (North Central Association). Their vision was clear: The avenue was to be a "carriage street" that would match, if not surpass, its counterparts in New York and Paris--both in quality and style.

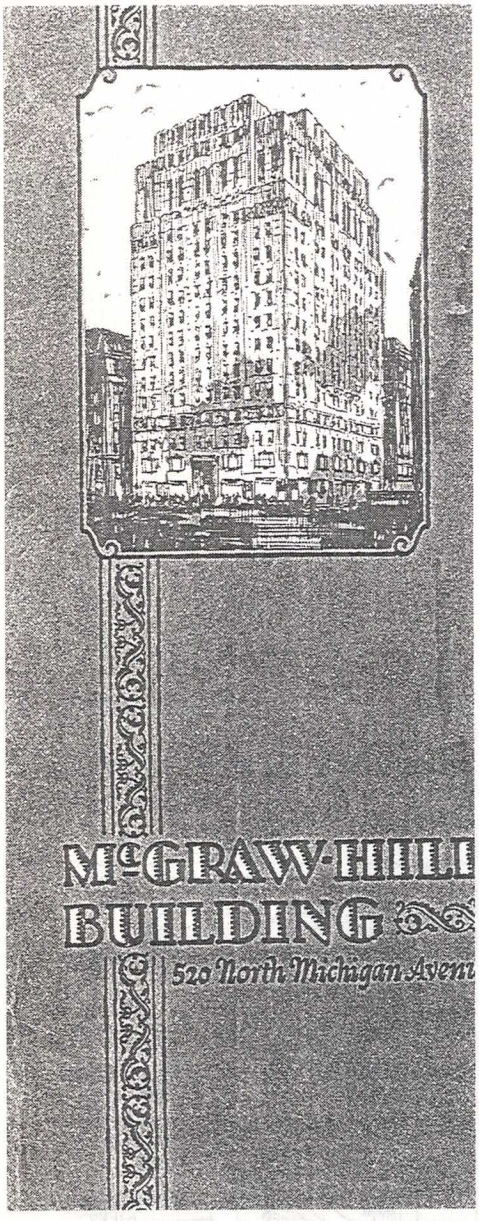
The McGraw-Hill Building, an important interpretation of this vision as well as a high-quality building on its own terms, represents:

- A distinguished collaboration between modern architecture and sculpture, through its terra cotta embellishments and carved stone panels--the work of an important early twentieth-century artist.
- A unique combination of a mid-scale building height (as envisioned by the avenue's original planners) with a design that draws on modernist European influences.
- A valuable counterpoint--through its then-



Looking north on Michigan Avenue—showing excellent location of McGRAW-HILL BUILDING

A locator map that appeared in a c.1930 brochure for the McGraw-Hill Building.



The cover of a leasing brochure for the building.

modern design--to the historicism of other landmark buildings in its vicinity, such as the Spanish Renaissance style of the Wrigley Building and the Gothic style of the Tribune Tower. An important complement to the Palmolive Building (919 N. Michigan), the only other major building built in this style on the avenue.

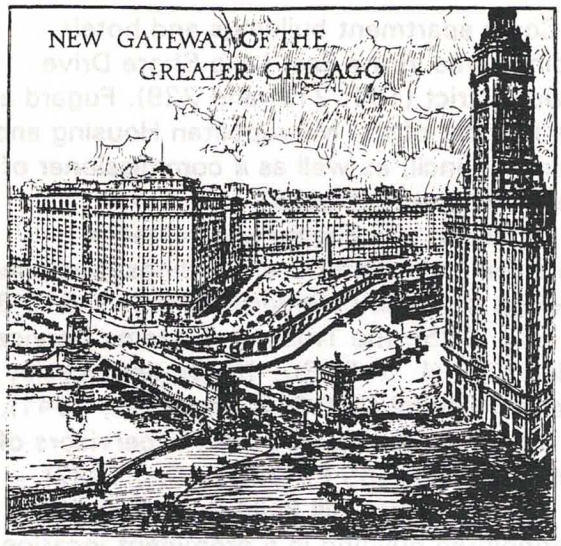
- A critical part of the diversity of styles and character that has made North Michigan Avenue a world-class street. Without this building, our understanding of the street's development would be sorely compromised.

Origins of the McGraw-Hill Building

In June 1928, the Michigan-Grand Building Corporation announced plans to construct a new 16-story office building at the southwest corner of Michigan and Grand avenues. The corporation, which was controlled by the law firm of Winston, Strawn, and Shaw, had obtained a 99-year lease from the parcel's owner, the Bass estate. A building permit was issued on August 27, 1928.

Conceived as a speculative office building, "520 North Michigan" quickly acquired a lead tenant and a new name. The McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, one of the world's largest trade paper and book publishers, signed a 25-year lease for four floors of the building. The lease provided space for the company's Midwestern headquarters, which consisted of editorial, circulation, and advertising staffs for the company's New York-based magazines, business catalogs and directories. In addition, several of the company's business, engineering, and industry magazines were headquartered here, including *System*, *Factory*, *The Magazine of Business* (now *Business Week)*, and the *Harvard Business Review*.

The move of McGraw-Hill from its previous quarters in the Loop to the newly developing North Michigan Avenue fit neatly with the hopes of the avenue's developers, who saw the area around the three-year-old Tribune Tower as a burgeoning center for publishing, advertising, and



The dedication of the Michigan Avenue bridge in 1920 opened the area north of the Chicago River to new development, as this drawing from a magazine article at the time indicates.

communications concerns.

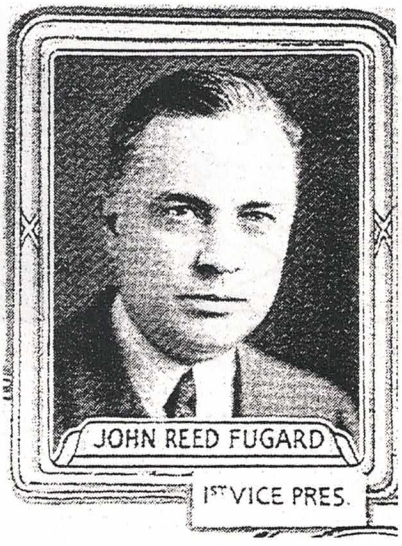
The signing of a prestigious tenant also made the building attractive to investors. In April 1929, while still under construction, the building was purchased by F. L. Maytag, the world's largest manufacturer of washing machines, who moved the offices of his Maytag Assurance Company into the building upon completion, but kept the building's name as McGraw-Hill.

The Architects

The McGraw-Hill Building was designed by the architectural firm of Thielbar and Fugard, formed in 1925 by Frederick J. Thielbar (1866-1941) and John Reed Fugard (1886-1968).

Thielbar, who was educated at the University of Illinois, had been superintendent of construction and later a partner at Holabird and Roche. His work at that architectural firm included construction supervision of the Chicago Temple Building (1922-23) at Washington and Dearborn.

Fugard also attended the University of Illinois, before becoming a partner of the firm of Fugard and Knapp in the 1920s. That firm was the associate architect of the Allerton Hotel (701 N. Michigan Ave.; 1923-24), and designed several

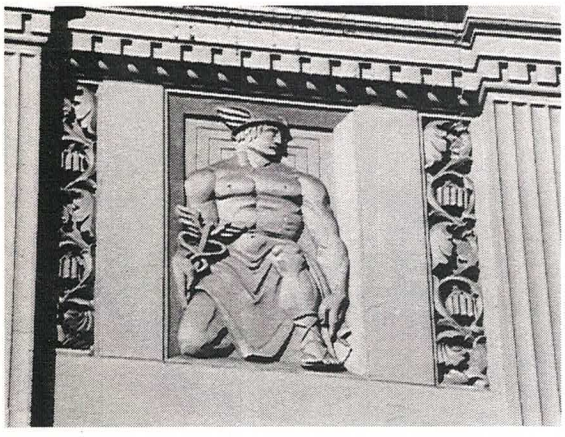


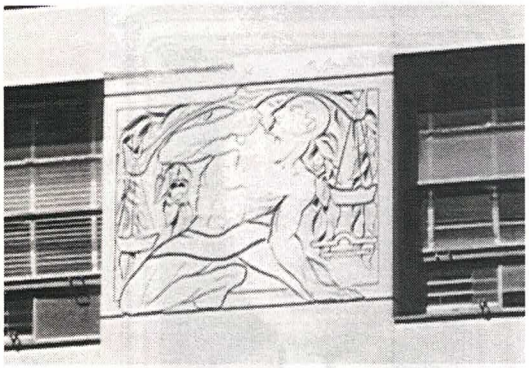
John Reed Fugard, one of the designers of the McGraw-Hill Building, was Vice President of the Illinois Society of Architects from 1931-32.

Gold Coast apartment buildings and hotels, including three in the East Lake Shore Drive Historic District (181, 219, and 229). Fugard also was a founder of the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, as well as a commissioner of the Chicago Housing Authority.

Thielbar and Fugard specialized in commercial and institutional buildings, including the design of Moody Memorial Church (1610-30 N. Clark St.; 1925), the Trustees Systems Service Building (201 N. Wells St.; 1930), and Wesley Memorial Hospital (250 E. Superior St.; 1941). They also were the construction supervisors of the Jewelers Building (35 E. Wacker Dr.; 1927).

The McGraw-Hill Building was intended as a well-appointed building in a prominent location, and Thielbar and Fugard undoubtedly saw it as a golden opportunity to demonstrate their design mettle. It is an outstanding example of Art Deco design and craftsmanship, combining a dramatically scaled profile with exquisite ornamentation based on modern interpretations of ancient Greek decoration and mythological figures. "Modern Classical" decoration, as this type of stylized classical detailing has been called by the architect Robert A.M. Stern, was in keeping with the image the developers and architects wished to project. A leasing brochure for the new building notes this desire:

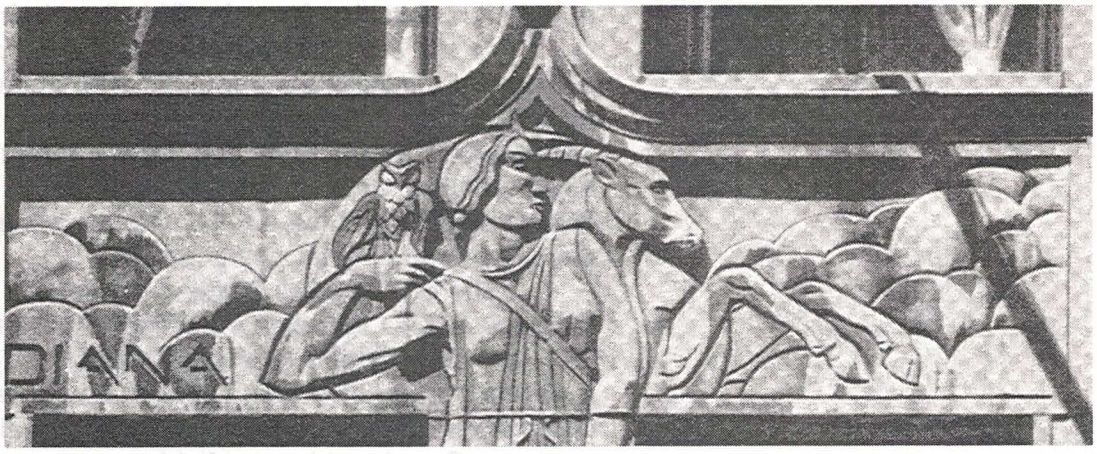


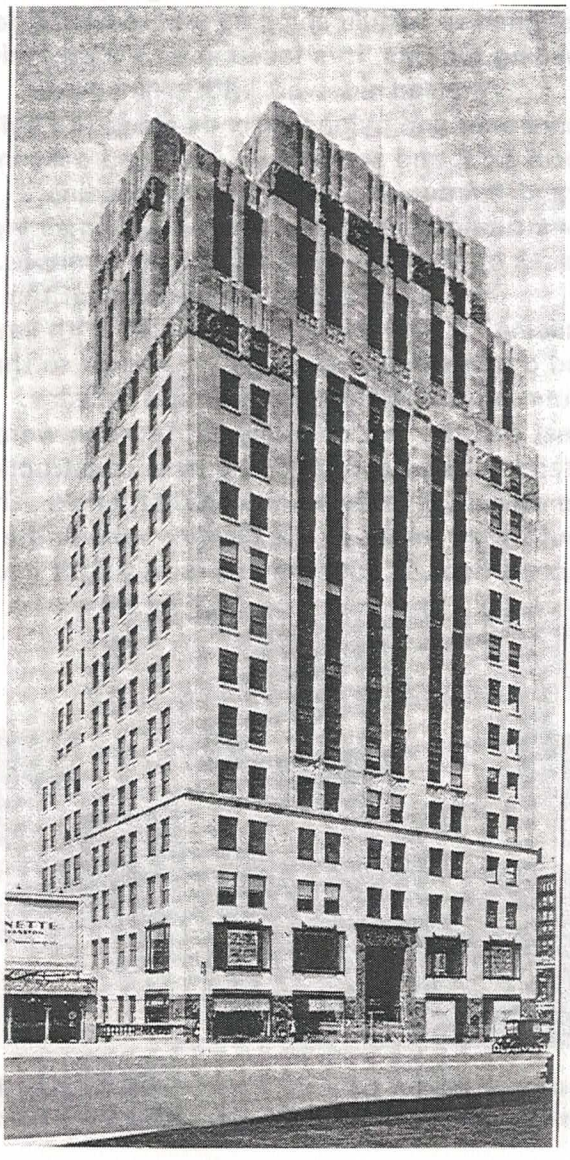


Thielbar and Fugard used sculptural panels on several of their skyscraper building designs, including the Trustees System Service (above) and McGraw-Hill (below).

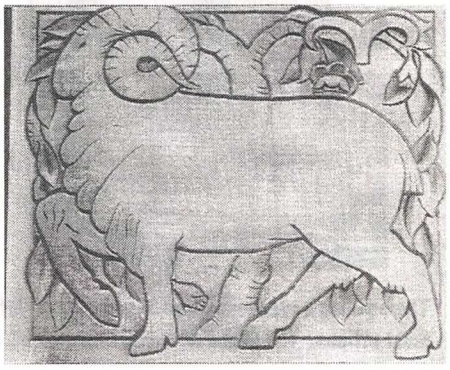
> **The style of the building is best described as a modern adaptation of the Greek Classic Architecture. Old fashioned cornices, which shut off light, and destroy the desired effect of light, have been omitted and wide decorative bands of sculptured panels are substituted.**

Red granite clads the building's first floor, providing a suitably rich setting for the cast iron-framed storefronts and the building's two-story-high main entrance. The building's upper walls are covered with light-grey Indiana limestone, punctuated with cast-iron spandrels that are decorated with stylized foliage derived from classic Greek ornamentation. Incised limestone panels in low relief are set between the fourth-floor windows, while mythological figures carved in bolder relief provide a vertical emphasis to the





The McGraw-Hill Building epitomizes 1920s skyscraper design, with its soaring vertical lines and setbacks, accented with "modernistic" ornament based on Greek mythology.



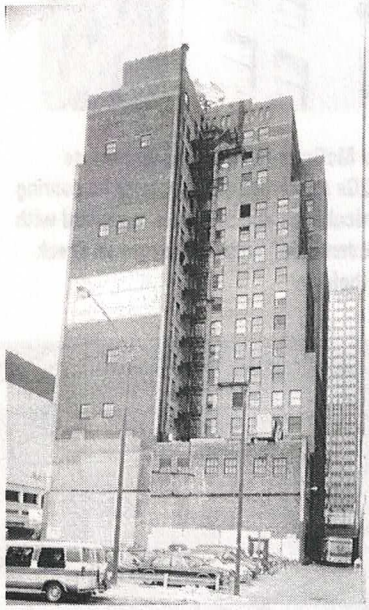
fluted piers that rise from the fifth-floor beltcourse.

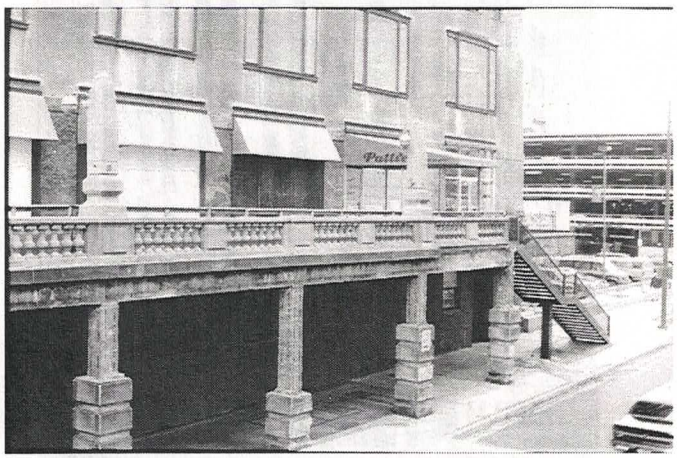
At the crown of the building, terra-cotta panels and medallions are molded with abstracted flora similar to that found on the cast-iron spandrels. These provide additional interest to the building's top, which is shaped by setbacks and dramatically topped by a tall limestone parapet pierced by rectangular openings.

The McGraw-Hill Building occupies a frontage of 100 feet along Michigan Avenue and 125 feet along Grand Avenue. Due to the fact that this section of Michigan Avenue is raised one level, the building's basement floor is actually at grade, at Grand and lower Michigan avenues. Designed to handle shipping and receiving for building tenants, it is faced in less costly brick.

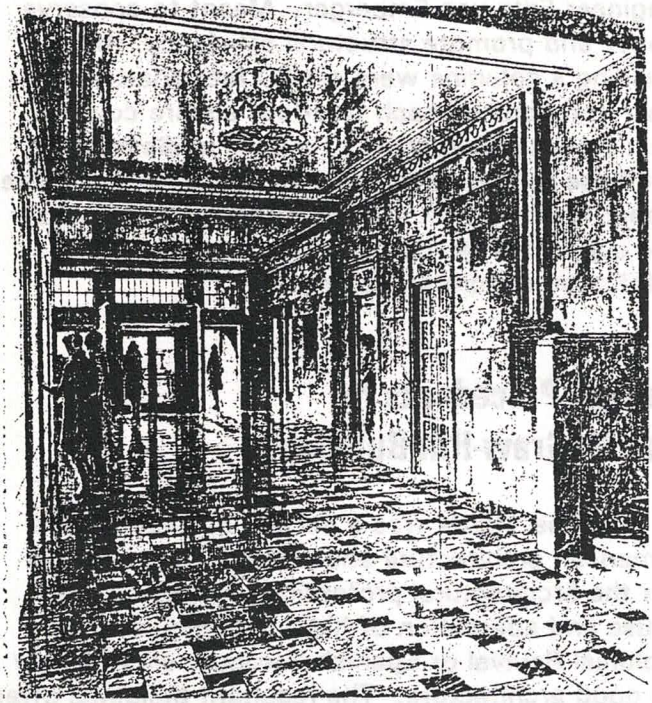
A raised sidewalk with a limestone balustrade and pylons extends along the building's north side, and stairs at its west end descend to Grand Avenue. It dates from the building's construction and is one of the few remaining pieces of Michigan Avenue "street furniture."

The first three structural bays of the building's south elevation are faced with limestone and ornamented with sculpture similar to that found on the Michigan and Grand facades. The west and the rest of the south facades were intended to be concealed by later construction and were finished in face and common brick. The southwest corner of the building, above the second floor, is cut away to form a light court.

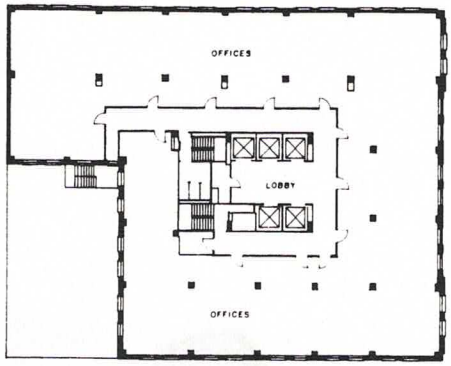




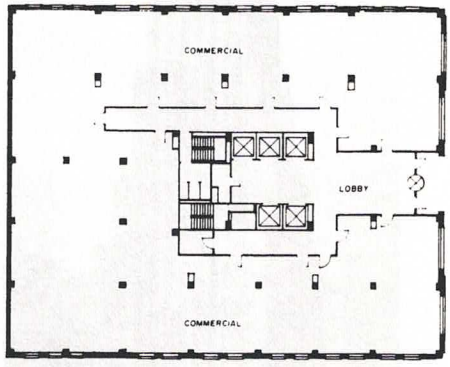
The building's west elevation was designed (left) so that another structure could be built behind it without blocking the light of most offices. The Grand Avenue facade (right) includes lower-level loading docks, sheltered by a classical-style balustrade.



The main lobby was finished with pink marble walls and bronze elevator doors. Retail tenants occupied the first two floors; offices occupied the upper floors.



TYPICAL OFFICE FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

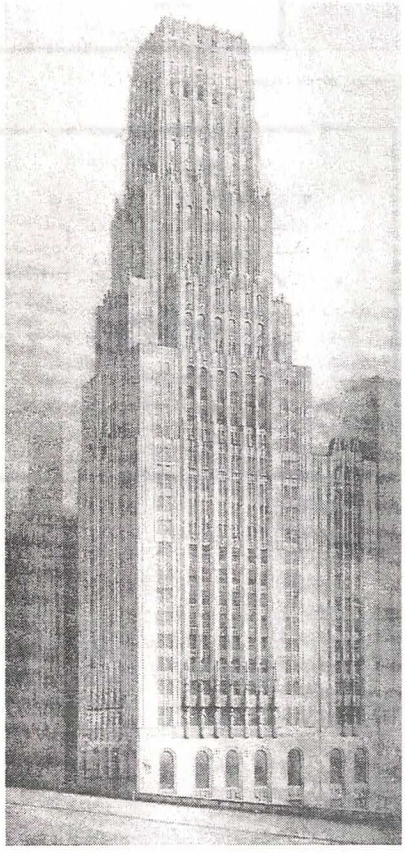
0 5 10 20 FEET

Retail uses originally occupied both the first and second floors, their display windows set in cast-iron frames ornamented with classical fluting and moldings reminiscent of 18th-century Adamesque design. These original frames remain for several first-floor store windows facing Grand and all second-floor windows.

The building's interior public spaces include the first-floor lobby. Its most notable remaining features are the pink marble-clad walls and bronze elevator doors, which repeat the stylized classical ornament seen on the exterior cast-iron spandrels. The upper- floor corridors originally were detailed with walnut trim and pink marble wainscotting and floors; several floors retain some of these details.

The engineering of the building merited an article in the July 25, 1929, issue of *Engineering News-Record*. The design engineer, James B. Black, was cited for the building's unique structural scheme, which consisted of composite concrete columns reinforced with cast-iron cores--a system that had been developed by the German

engineer Fritz von Emperger. Meant to conserve space and promote structural efficiency, the building's columns were set 20 feet apart with cast-iron cores in each two-foot square column that were tapered from 11 inches in diameter at the base to three inches at the upper stories. The upper floors, which include a series of setbacks, are supported by massive five- to eight-foot reinforced concrete girders.



This second-place entry for the 1922 *Chicago Tribune* competition, submitted by the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, provided American architects during the 1920s with a prototype for modern skyscraper design.

Design Precedents for the McGraw-Hill Building

The 1920s was a decade of exoticism in American architecture and a time of questioning for the architectural profession. For some, the reuse and adaptation of historic styles, such as Colonial Revival or Spanish Baroque, was the key to good architecture. The resultant buildings often were billboards that proclaimed their intellectual debts to the past. Others, however, believed that this "plundering" of history was inappropriate, and that "Jazz Age" America deserved a comparatively spirited modern architecture.

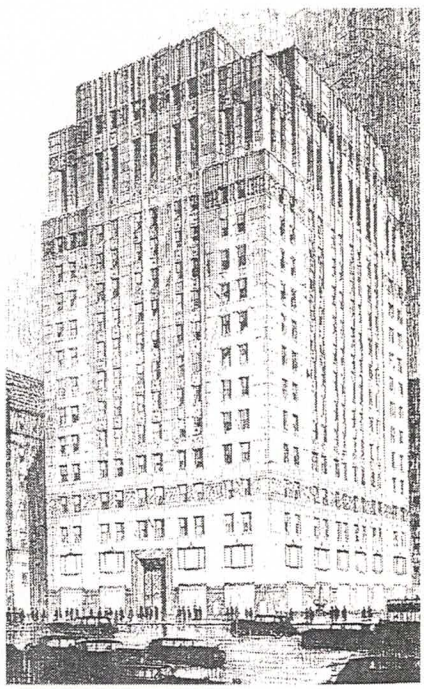
The "modernistic" Art Deco style of the McGraw-Hill Building fits into this latter category. Inspired by the *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs* held in Paris in 1925, Art Deco quickly spread to America where it became the popular architectural and decorative style for a public that wanted its buildings to look new and "smart," without looking **too** different. The style emphasized sharply rectilinear forms, vertical lines, and multiple setbacks. Art Deco buildings often appeared to soar into the sky, without the dampening effect of "old-fashioned" cornices. Unlike the more austere International Style espoused by Mies van der Rohe and others, Art Deco embraced decoration, encouraging lavish, often vividly polychromed ornament that was executed in a variety of materials. Its combination of "up-to-date-ness" and eye-appeal made Art Deco the perfect style for those who wanted to project a progressive image.

The building's combination of form and verticality derives from one of the most influential

skyscraper designs of the 1920s, Eliel Saarinen's entry for the *Chicago Tribune* competition of 1922. Although it placed second to Hood and Howell's winning neo-Gothic design, Saarinen's unbuilt tower became the prototype for a generation of American skyscrapers. Its lack of an obvious historical style, combined with an overall form that emphasized verticality -- projecting piers alternating with recessed windows, plus multiple setbacks unbroken by projecting cornices -- impressed both architects and critics as the obvious solution to modern skyscraper design.

The McGraw-Hill Building is a study in miniature of the design lessons inherent in Saarinen's Tribune Tower design. An examination of both designs shows striking similarities of form and modeling, including a visually separate base; a shaft, composed of relatively solid corner piers that flank projecting piers and recessed windows; and setbacks that define distinctive building tops. McGraw-Hill's lesser number of stories does not allow the same number of setbacks as Saarinen's design, but the overall intent remains similar.

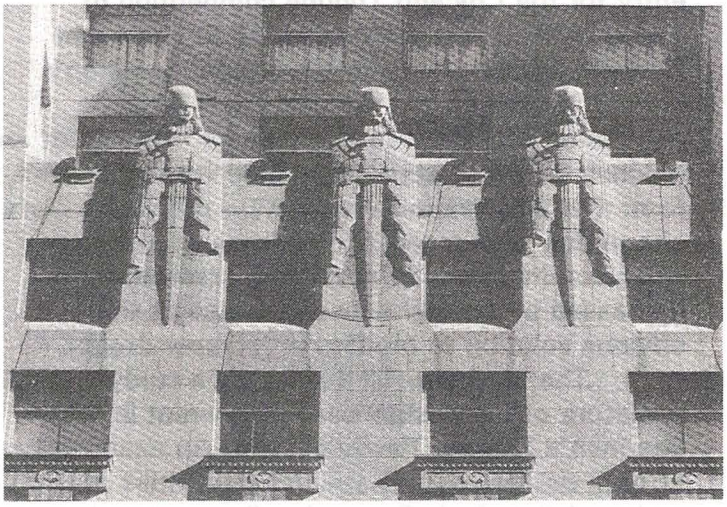
Another similarity between the Saarinen project and the McGraw-Hill Building is the incorporation of non-traditional ornamental schemes that add visual interest to their facades. In both, decorative sculpture focuses the eye at key points, adding emphasis to the verticality of each building. With the Saarinen tower, decoration is focused at the base of the vertical piers that define the building shaft and at setbacks, encouraging the eye to read the building as a unified thrust upwards into the sky. The McGraw-Hill Building uses ornament in the same way, with limestone figures, carved in low relief, supporting the vertical piers. At setbacks, terra cotta panels and medallions encourage the eye to read the separate setback parapets as defined edges, giving the design an extra visual snap that unornamented setbacks would lack.



Although not as tall and with fewer setbacks than Saarinen's *Chicago Tribune* design, the McGraw-Hill Building has similar design elements, including projecting vertical piers, recessed windows, and non-traditional ornament.

Sculpture and Architecture

American architects in the 1920s had not abandoned the idea of a decorative architecture, as was encouraged later by practitioners of the



Architects and sculptors collaborated on the design of several major Chicago buildings during the 1920s. The Medinah Athletic Club (across the street from McGraw-Hill) includes sword-wielding prophets that guard passersby along the avenue.

International Style. In Chicago, the tradition of collaboration between architects and artists could be seen in such earlier structures as the Marquette Building (1893) and the City Hall-County Building (1911), both designed by Holabird & Roche.

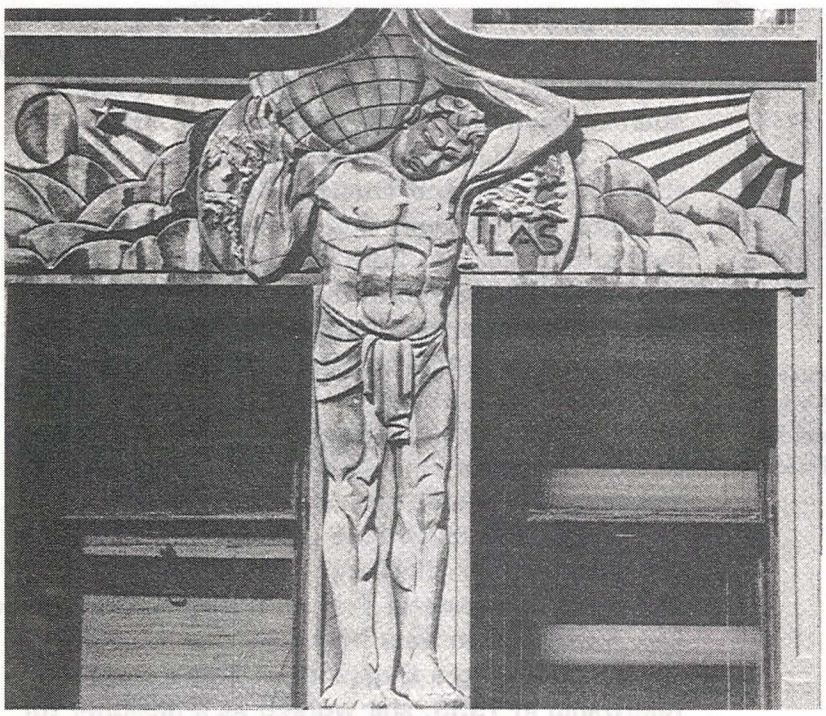
Several prominent 1920s building facades incorporated sculpture: 333 North Michigan (Holabird and Root; 1928), One North LaSalle (Vitzthum & Burns; 1930), and -- across the street from McGraw-Hill -- the former Medinah Athletic Club (Walter W. Ahlschlager; 1929).

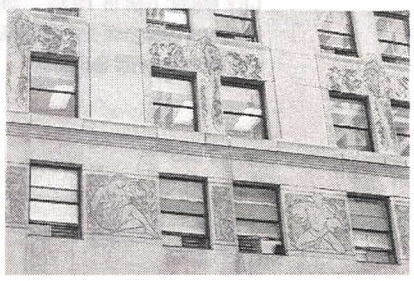
The McGraw-Hill Building is a prime example of this trend. Its extensive use of limestone, terra cotta, and cast-iron ornament is of major importance to its visual appeal. The architects, Thielbar and Fugard, chose a scheme based on ancient Greek architecture and mythology. Interest in similar reinterpretations of Classicism originated with turn-of-the-century Central European architects, such as Otto Wagner and Joseph Olbrich. When architects in 1920s Paris began to use modernized classical ornament, it became especially attractive to Americans, always eager to adopt the latest in French design.

At its simplest, abstracted details derived from Greek temple architecture were used to

ornament the cast-iron spandrels and terra-cotta panels decorating the building shaft and the first- and second-floor display windows. Color was used to good effect with the pale yellow terra cotta panels, drawing the eye to the building top while magnifying the visual effect of morning sun.

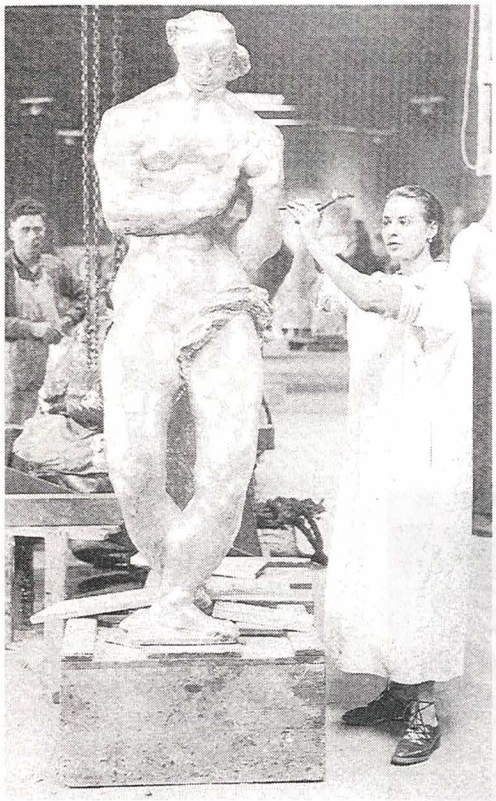
At its most elaborate, a series of limestone panels depicting Greek mythology and figures of the zodiac were commissioned from artists Eugene Van Breeman Lux and his wife Gwen Lux. The Luxes created two different sets of decorative stone panels. One series located between the fourth-floor windows depict characters from the zodiac; for example, the bull of Taurus and a young girl representing Virgo. The style of these figures is simplified and modernized, with spare detail accentuated by the technique of incising the design into flat limestone panels. The effect is visually direct and easily readable from street level.





The McGraw-Hill Building boasts sculpture by the husband-wife team of Eugene and Gwen Lux. Right: Rectangular panels incised with "modernistic" zodiac symbols ornament the fourth floor, while cross-shaped panels are positioned between fifth-floor windows. Left: A sculpture of Atlas, which is carved in an angular, expressive manner, is typical of the fifth-floor panels.

The other set of panels, placed at the fifth-floor, serves as a visual anchor for the projecting piers of the building shaft. On the Michigan Avenue facade, these cross-shaped panels depict three Greek deities: the huntress Diana is shown with a deer; Atlas bears the globe on his broad shoulders; and Helios commands the horse that draws the chariot of the Sun. The Grand Avenue facade also has panels similar in size and shape, but less elaborate in scheme, bearing only stylized vines, heavy with foliage. Higher in relief and more boldly sculpted than the zodiac panels, these sculptures provide a vertical thrust that takes the eye upward along the building shaft to its summit.



Gwen Lux works on the sculpture, *Eve*, which was installed in New York's Radio City Music Hall in 1933. She and her husband designed the sculptural panels on the McGraw-Hill Building.

Eugene Lux was born in Hungary in 1900 and trained as a sculptor at the Academies of Fine Arts at Paris, Vienna, and Munich. He studied under Ivan Mestrovic, the sculptor of the Indians on horseback that ornament Congress Plaza along Michigan Avenue. Among the other Chicago art works designed by Lux are the stone panels depicting the history of banking that decorate the original entrance of the Trustees System Service Building, 201 North Wells Street. During the 1930s, Lux became an industrial designer, a newly popular field glamorized by the work of designers such as Raymond Loewy and Donald Deskey.

Gwen Lux was her husband's partner for the McGraw-Hill and Trustees System Service projects, commissions that came very early in her long artistic career. Born Gwen Wickerts in 1908, she worked in Detroit in the art pottery studios of Mary Chase Stratton, the founder of the Pewabic Pottery and an important figure in the history of American Arts and Crafts. She studied art at the Maryland Institute of Arts in Baltimore and the Boston School of Fine Arts, and traveled to Yugoslavia to study with Ivan Mestrovic.

Her first major solo commission, following her work with her husband in Chicago, was an aluminum sculpture of *Eve*, commissioned by Radio City Music Hall in New York City and installed in 1933. Following a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship in 1933, she worked as a designer for Steuben Glass before becoming head of the sculpture department at the School of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts. Following World War

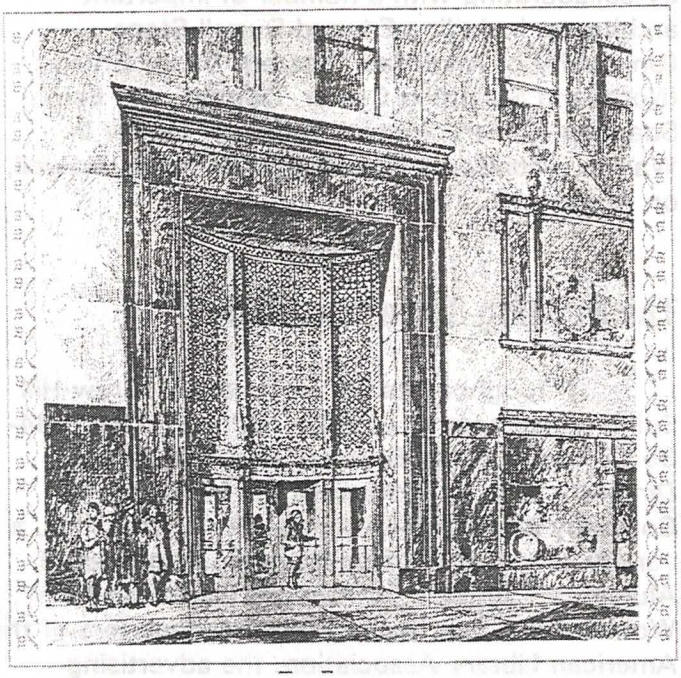
II, Ms. Lux enhanced an already impressive career by collaborating with a number of important architects, including Edward Durrell Stone (University of Arkansas Theater), Victor Gruen (Northland Shopping Center, Detroit), and Eero Saarinen (General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan). She died in Honolulu, Hawaii, on August 19, 1986.

The Building Since the 1930s

Throughout its 65 years, the McGraw-Hill Building has been a prestige address. The 1934-35 *Chicago Central Business and Real Estate Directory* lists, in addition to the McGraw-Hill Company and its various magazine subsidiaries, a variety of tenants, including the local offices of Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa) and F.W. Woolworth & Co., the national headquarters of the American Library Association, the advertising agencies of Burnet-Kuhn and Hanff Metzger Inc., the German Consulate, and offices for several out-of-town radio stations, including KNX (Los Angeles), KWK (St. Louis), and WWJ (Detroit).

The offices of the building's architects, Thielbar and Fugard, were located in the building, and Fugard was listed as the building manager. The building also reinforced Michigan Avenue as an upscale shopping street -- even during the worst days of the Depression -- housing Holland Art Galleries, the millinery shop of Bess Friedlander, and the furrier Martin Tausz.

In the post-World War II years, as North Michigan Avenue continued to be redeveloped with new office buildings, the McGraw-Hill Building retained its appeal to image-conscious companies. A 1957 directory reveals that several businesses listed as tenants in 1934 retained offices in the building, including McGraw-Hill, Alcoa, and Burnet-Kuhn Advertising. Publishing and communications companies remained a large percentage of building tenants, including the American Trade Publishing Company, George Brodsky Advertising, Rotogravure Corporation of America, Ziv Television Programs, and the Chicago bureau of the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. The German Consulate had



Although the original decorative metal grillwork (above) has been replaced by stone and glass (left), the main entrance of the McGraw-Hill Building still retains much of its elegance.

moved elsewhere, but Japan had chosen the building to house its own consular staff.

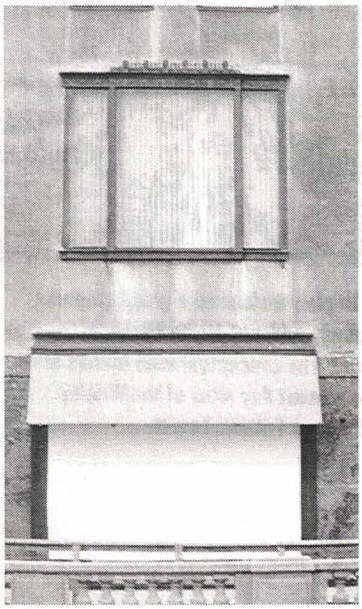
In 1966, the building retained a solid tenant base despite the 1961 departure of the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company. Encyclopedia Britannica Press, Lauesen & Salomon Advertising, the Trans-Lux Television Corporation, and United Artists Television Incorporated were but a few of the recently acquired tenants that joined old standbys such as the American Trade Publishing Company and the consular offices of Japan. The building continued to house magazine editorial offices, including those for *American Dairy Review*, *American Journal of Nursing*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Science and Mechanics*. In addition, Fugard, Burt Wilkinson & Orth, the successor firm to Thielbar and Fugard, continued to rent space in the building that their founding partners had designed 38 years earlier.

The overall silhouette of the McGraw-Hill Building remains intact today, while its sculpture

continues to please passersby. Exterior physical integrity is good, with major alterations being limited to the building's main entrance and storefronts. The four original storefronts facing Michigan Avenue have been remodeled, requiring the removal of historic cast-iron window frames and the substitution of later metal and stone frames, simpler in design. Three storefronts facing Grand Avenue also have been changed, although two of those retain their original frames. An original store window on the southeast corner of the building has been closed with brick infill.

The two-story-high entrance retains its overall shape, including its original red granite surround. However, its original curved metal grillework was removed by a post-World War II remodeling and replaced with glass, white marble, and bronze.

Inside the building, the main lobby retains original marble walls with geometric Art Deco trim. Surviving original metalwork includes bronze elevator doors and mailbox. Alterations include replacement light fixtures. Several upper floors retain original marble wainscotting and wood trim.



The building's original first-floor store windows along Michigan Avenue (top, in a c.1930 photo) have been replaced by more modern storefronts (left). Along the Grand Avenue side (above), both the first- and second-floor windows retain their cast-iron frames.

The Evolution of North Michigan Avenue

The soaring land prices during downtown's economic boom of the 1880s did more than send Chicago's developers and architects reaching for the sky with their new highrise designs and technology. They also stimulated dreams of busting out of the constraints of the Loop and creating a new city, one grander than ever seen before in America.

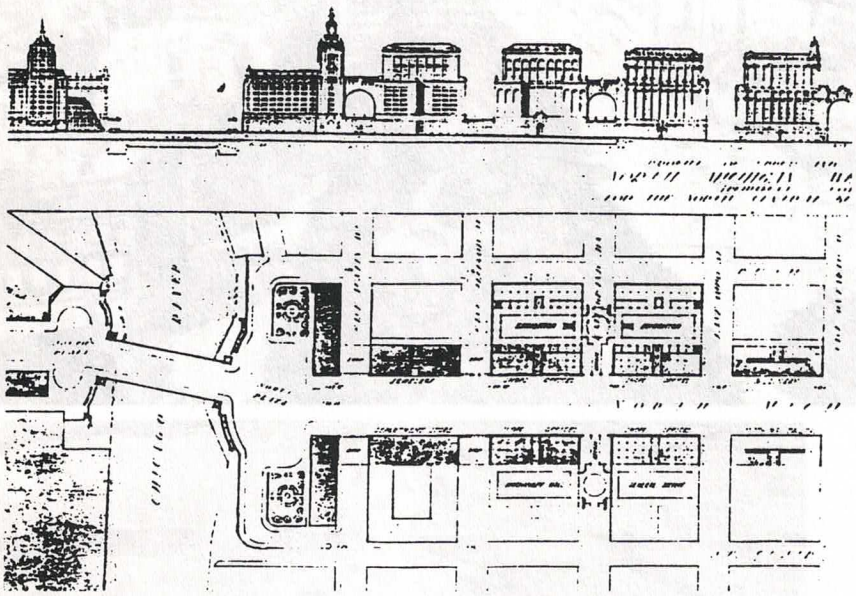
One of the most persistent of these visions was to extend the success of Michigan Boulevard--facing Grant Park--north from Randolph to the Chicago River, and beyond to Lake Michigan at Oak Street. The early history of what is now North Michigan Avenue was as a narrow, primarily residential street (Pine Street), bordered on the east by Lake Michigan landfill and on the west by a mix of land uses.

A 1918 plan envisioned a grand gateway to a newly widened North Michigan Avenue. The conceptual twin towers are at the present day sites of the Wrigley Building and Tribune Tower.

From the very beginning, many of these visions to transform Pine Street were based on the grand imperial avenues of Europe, particularly those created by Baron Haussman for Napoleon III, such as the Champs Elysees in Paris. These ideas for North Michigan Avenue started in the 1880s with a proposal to extend Michigan from Randolph to the river as a grand two-level boulevard. The lower level would be used for heavy wagons and deliveries, while the upper level would be reserved for carriages and pedestrian promenades.

In the next decade, a roadway tunnel was proposed to connect "lower" Michigan Avenue with a widened Pine Street, north of the river. The proposed tunnel would have begun with a grand fountain at Madison Street, gone underground just south of Randolph, and come up again several blocks north of the river. It would have been like no other tunnel: "A thing of beauty, decorated with mural carvings and statues in full relief."

These early ideas, although not implemented, did set a tone for the future expansion of North Michigan Avenue, which was clearly not to be just another street--but a street among streets. In the 1909 Plan of Chicago, this vision was given a strongly visual image that



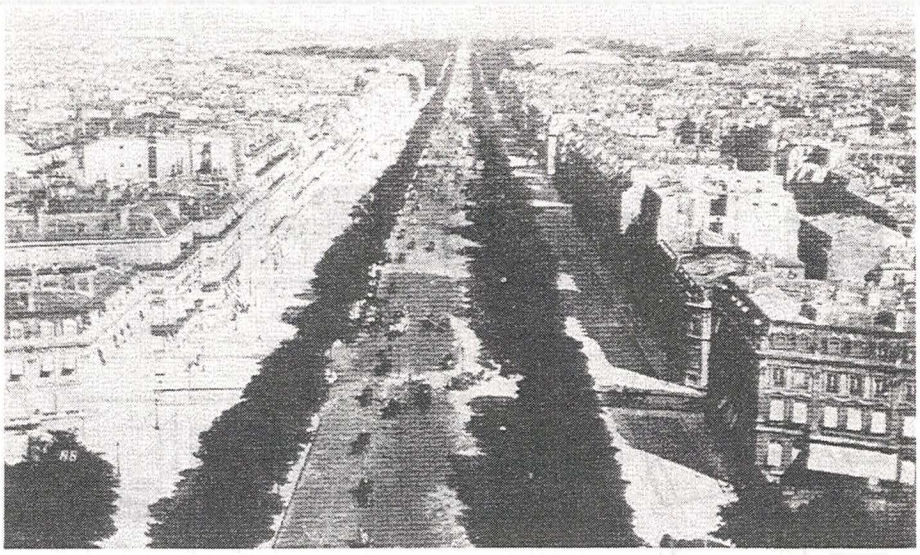
The 1918 plan for North Michigan Avenue, which was commissioned by property owners, was never formally enacted. However, its vision of an elegant shopping street with mid-rise buildings influenced many of the buildings constructed during the 1920s.

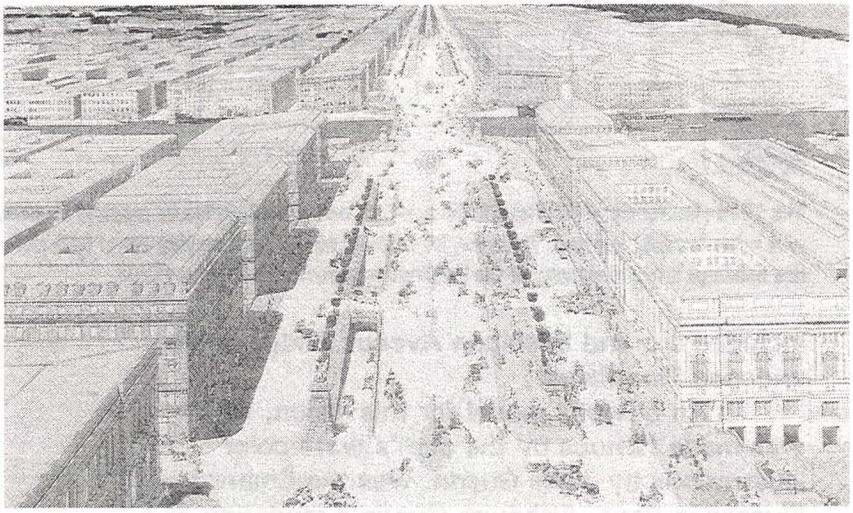
included a grand Michigan Avenue Bridge and a widened Pine Street.

An obvious model for this vision, which was made famous by the plan's watercolor illustrations by Jules Guerin, was the Champs Elysees in Paris. Although Guerin's rendering of a widened North Michigan Avenue depicts a series of imaginary buildings with uniform cornice heights, the main impact is the grand sweep of the avenue, whose point of infinity is the Water Tower itself.

The publication of the Plan was followed by an elaborate publicity campaign, and by 1911 the Plan Commission had proposed a two-level "Boulevard Link" that would stretch six blocks, from Lake to Ohio streets. A monograph, *Creating a World Famous Street*, was published by the Commission, whose chairman, Charles Wacker noted:

> **Surely Chicago is entitled to one decent, wide, respectable street unencumbered by cross-traffic, high grade in every way, as is upper Fifth Avenue in New York....It is a libel upon the common sense of Chicago to suppose for a moment that a**



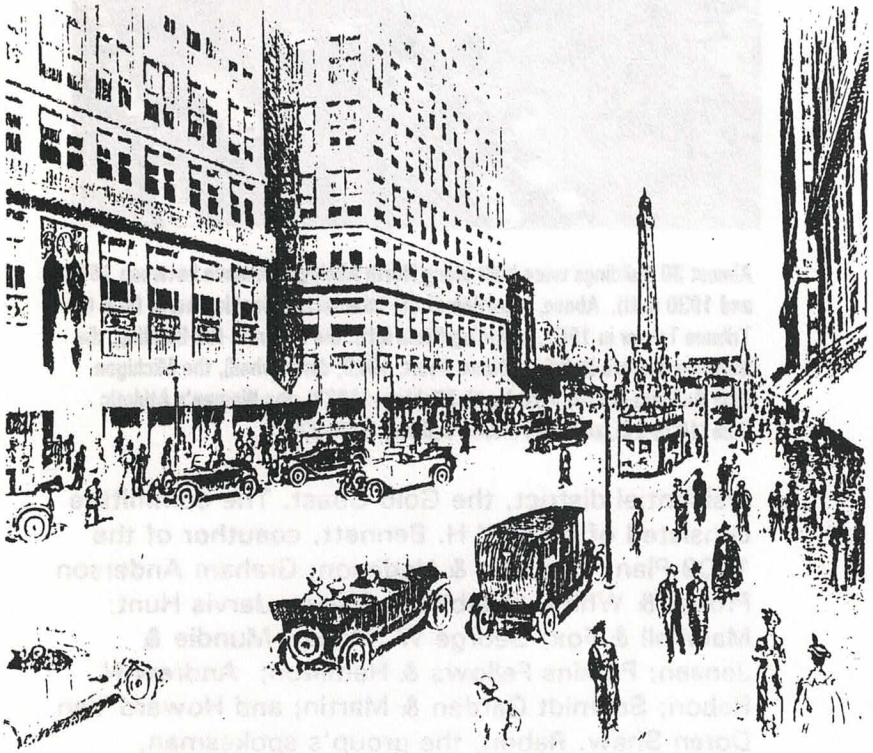


North Michigan Avenue was envisioned as a Midwestern counterpart to Paris's Champs Elysees, as shown (top) in this photo from the 1912 *Wacker's Manual for the Plan of Chicago*). Middle: Artist Jules Guerin's watercolor of this grandly scaled boulevard, looking north from Randolph Street to the proposed Michigan Avenue bridge and beyond. Beginning in 1918, property along the west side of "Pine Street" was demolished for the creation of the new North Michigan Avenue (bottom).

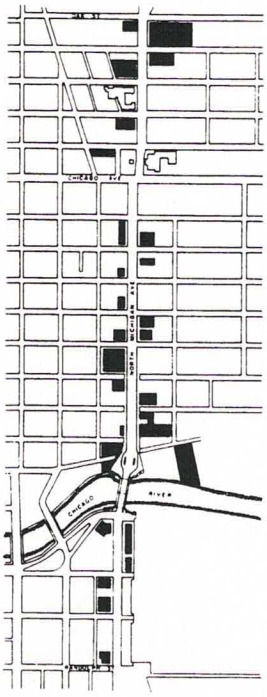
business thoroughfare as fine as Michigan Avenue is between 12th and Randolph Streets--possibly the most magnificent thing in the world--should be obligated to halt at an impregnable. narrow gap at Randolph Street.

In 1913, Chicago voters approved a $3.8 million bond issue for building the bridge and widening Pine Street to a boulevard. Meanwhile, the property owners along Pine Street had founded the North Central Association (the current Greater North Michigan Avenue Association) to promote the "Boulevard Link" and to steward its development. Uses were limited, including no saloons, laundries, or automobile showrooms.

Also, in a unique attempt at community architectural planning, the association invited a group of Chicago's most noted architects to develop an "architectural treatment...for establishing the character" of the street between the downtown Loop and the city's foremost



An illustration from the 1918 plan for North Michigan Avenue (left) shows the masonry-clad office buildings that were considered appropriate for the developing avenue. Chic stores were to occupy the first two floors of these buildings, providing a continuous retail strip dedicated to the carriage trade. At right, the south facade of the newly-constructed McGraw-Hill Building, c.1929.



Almost 30 buildings were built along North Michigan Avenue between 1918 and 1930 (left). Above, a portion of the streetscape, looking north from the Tribune Tower in 1957, including (from left): the McGraw-Hill Building, the Michigan Square Building (Diana Court; 1929; demolished), the Michigan-Ohio Building (1924), 620 North Michigan (1928), the Woman's Athletic Club (1926-28), and the Farwell Building 1926-27).

residential district, the Gold Coast. The committee consisted of Edward H. Bennett, coauthor of the 1909 Plan; Coolidge & Hodgson; Graham Anderson Probst & White; Holabird & Roche; Jarvis Hunt; Marshall & Fox; George W. Maher; Mundie & Jensen; Perkins Fellows & Hamilton; Andrew N. Rebori; Schmidt Garden & Martin; and Howard Van Doren Shaw. Rebori, the group's spokesman, announced:

> No such opportunity has presented itself in the history of

history of the world unless it was in that of the rebuilding of Paris. We want ideas that will be the best from the viewpoint of occupancy and architecture and which will at the same time yield the best return on the capital invested.

The group's recommendations, which were published in a 1918 issue of *The American Architect,* echo the street configuration and spaciousness of the 1909 Plan. However, in trying to guide actual development, the latter plan is less abstract, including such specifics as: a height limit of 10 stories, a uniform balcony line at 36 feet, and "strong architectural elements at the sidewalk to be of uniform artistic and commercial value."

With the opening of the Michigan Avenue Bridge in 1920, development began along the newly widened thoroughfare. Although no plan was formally adopted, much of the idealism and concepts of the Rebori recommendations were carried through in many of the buildings constructed throughout the 1920s. While uniform building heights and continuous third-story balconies were not adhered to, most of the buildings displayed a continuity that set them apart from the Loop business district, where buildings had been constructed over a longer period of time.

The new storefronts along North Michigan Avenue, which were intended for finer specialty shops, were elegantly detailed and featured large, plate-glass windows. Unlike the Loop, this was the chance to create a continuous "modern" street frontage. Old conventions, such as heavy overhanging cornices and ornamentation, were largely replaced by more European designs, which often used smooth, Bedford limestone facades with elegant detailing and sculptures.

Between 1918 and 1930, when the Depression halted development, 28 buildings were constructed along North Michigan Avenue, making it one of the few streets in downtown Chicago where the design represents a very limited time period--a showcase for art and architecture of the time. Development picked up again in the 1960s and '70s, but the sense of elegant design and mid-range scale was replaced by a new highrise-design aesthetic that generally ignored the earlier visions of the street.

The 1918 plan for North Michigan Avenue called for the first two floors of buildings along the avenue to be devoted to retail use. Above, the storefronts of the Palmolive Building (Holabird and Root, 1927-28) and (below) the McGraw-Hill Building, both of which were designed in accordance with this vision.

APPENDICES

Criteria for Designation

The following criteria, as set forth in Section 2-210-620 of the Chicago Municipal Code, should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether the McGraw-Hill Building should be recommended for landmark designation.

CRITERION 1

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

North Michigan Avenue was conceived as a high-end extension of Chicago's business district, and its first phase of development between 1918 and 1930 set the tone for subsequent growth. The McGraw-Hill Building is an excellent example of the typical building intended for the avenue -- an office building catering to image-conscious corporations and associations. Retail spaces on the building's first two floors were designed to reinforce Michigan Avenue's other urban role as a retail street dedicated to the carriage trade. A beautiful building in its own right, the McGraw-Hill Building remains today one of only a handful of similar buildings that fully illustrates the promise that North Michigan Avenue held for its creators.

CRITERION 4

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

The architects of the McGraw-Hill Building combined elements from several important trends

in 1920s American architecture to create an outstanding example of skyscraper design.

- The building's overall form, a synthesis of vertical lines and multiple setbacks, reveals the influence of Eliel Saarinen's *Chicago Tribune* competition entry, which was a prototype for the best skyscrapers of the 1920s.

- The crisp rectilinear profile of McGraw-Hill, combined with its use of non-traditional ornament, also shows the architects' indebtedness to the newly popular Art Deco style, developed as a response to the *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs*, held in Paris in 1925. Enormously popular during the late 1920s, Art Deco was seen as "modernistic", an architectural style that looked new and "smart" without completely abandoning all aspects of traditional architecture.

- McGraw-Hill's incorporation of low-relief decorative panels into its design relates the building to a tradition of Chicago buildings embellished with sculpture. The use of "Modern Classical" ornament, as seen in the building's zodiac and mythological sculptures, shows the influence of fashionable European design trends that favored the use of stylized classical forms and ornament in modern buildings.

CRITERION 5

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

The McGraw-Hill Building is the collaborative product of the architectural partnership of Thielbar and Fugard and the sculptors Eugene Van Breeman Lux and Gwen Lux.

- Frederick Thielbar and John Reed Fugard contributed to the development of Chicago's near North Side, especially North Michigan Avenue and the adjacent Streeterville neighborhood. Buildings on which the two architects worked, either together or as members of previous architectural firms, include buildings at 181, 219, and 229 East Lake Shore Drive; Moody Memorial Church (1610-30 N. Clark St.); the Allerton Hotel (701 N. Michigan); the Jewelers Building (35 E. Wacker); the Chicago Temple Building (77 W. Washington); Wesley Memorial Hospital (250 E. Superior), and the Trustees System Service Building (201 N. Wells).

- The husband-wife team of Eugene Van Breeman Lux and Gwen Lux were the sculptors for the decorative schemes of two prominent Chicago office buildings, the McGraw-Hill Building and the Trustees System Service Building, both designed by Thielbar and Fugard. Their work shows an appreciation of "Modern Classicism", a stylization of ancient Greek and Roman ornament popular in fashionable European circles of the 1920s.

- Gwen Lux was a well-regarded artist in her own right whose career is significant for her collaboration with several important architects and for her success in an artistic field -- sculpture -- traditionally dominated by men. She worked with architects of the stature of Edward Durrell Stone, Victor Gruen, and Eero Saarinen on a number of prominent commissions following World War II. The sculptures on the McGraw-Hill Building represent some of her earliest "architectural" work.

Significant Features

In carrying out its permit review responsibility, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks must review the effect of proposed alterations to "any significant historical or architectural feature" (§2-120-770 of the Municipal Code of Chicago). When buildings and districts are under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission identifies these features in order that owners and the public can understand the specific elements that distinguish the landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the McGraw-Hill Building, the staff recommends that the significant historical and architectural features of this building include:

- All exterior aspects of the north and east elevations of the building, the front two structural bays of the south elevation, and the roofline.
- The elevated walkway and limestone balustrade of the building's north (Grand Avenue) side.
- The building's main lobby.

Selected Bibliography

The Art of Rockefeller Center. New York: The Rockefeller Group, 1994.

Chicago Architects Design: A Century of Architectural Drawings from The Art Institute of Chicago. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago; New York: Rizzoli, 1982.

Handbook for Architects and Builders. Chicago: Illinois Society of Architects, 1929, 1931-32.

Harris, Emily. *National Register Nomination form for a North Michigan Avenue Historic District* (1984).

McGraw-Hill Building, 520 North Michigan Avenue rental brochure, [1928].

"The North Michigan Avenue, Chicago Development." *American Architect* 114 (December 11, 1918), 690-94.

Robinson, Cervin, and Rosemarie Haag Bletter. *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Stamper, John W. *Chicago's North Michigan Avenue: Planning and Development, 1900-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991.

Stern, Robert A.M., Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Mellins. *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars*. New York: Rizzoli, 1987.

Zukowsky, John, ed. *Chicago Architecture, 1872-1922: Birth of a Metropolis*. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987.

Special thanks to Robert Sideman for his assistance with research on the building and its sculpture. Additional material used in the preparation of this report is on file and available to the public in the offices of the Landmarks Division of the Department of Planning and Development.

Acknowledgments

CITY OF CHICAGO

Richard M. Daley, Mayor

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Valerie B. Jarrett, Commissioner
Charles Thurow, Deputy Commissioner

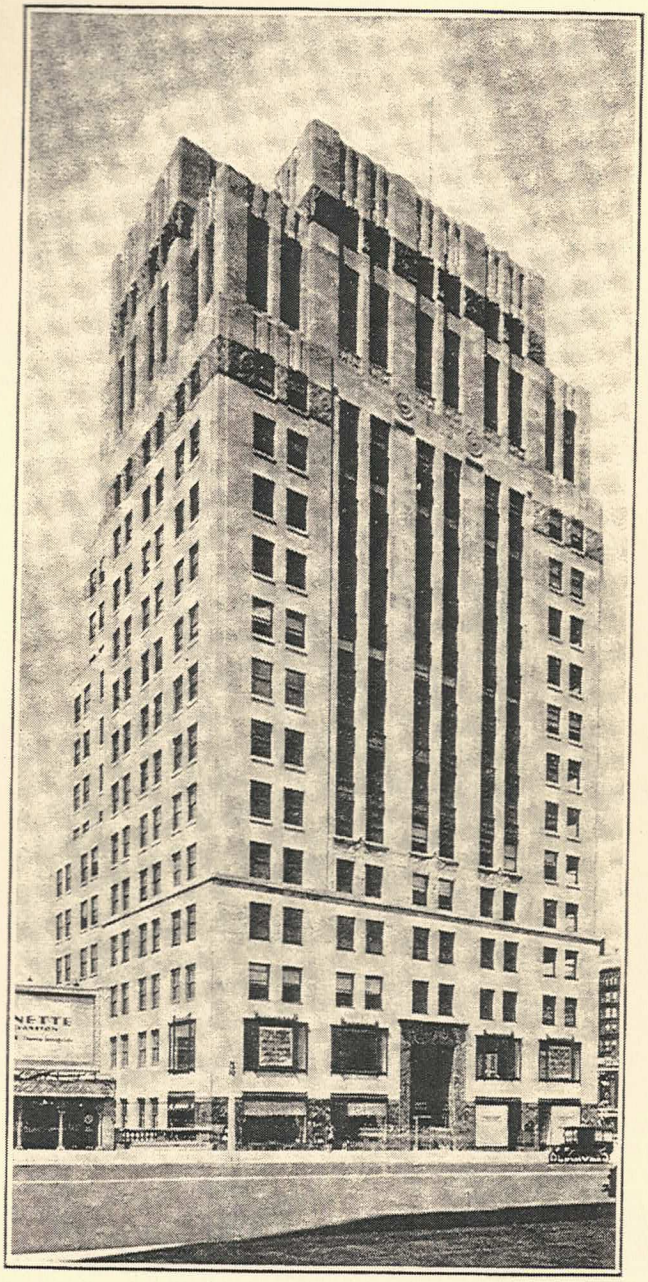
Staff

Terry Tatum, research and writing
Dwight Martin, production
Alicia Mazur, layout
James Peters, editing and layout
Meredith Taussig, research
Charles Thurow, writing

Illustrations

American Architect
(pp. 17, 19 left)
The Art of Rockefeller Center
(page 12)
Berger, "Magnificent Milestones", *Chicago Tribune* (July 26, 1992)
(page 19 right)
Chicago Department of Planning and Development
(pp. 4, 5 middle right, 6, 11 top, 14 left, 15 top and bottom right)
Handbook for Architects and Builders, 1929
(pp. 5 bottom left, 15 bottom left, inside back cover)
Handbook for Architects and Builders, 1931-32
(page 3 bottom)
McGraw-Hill Building rental brochure
(pp. 1, 2, 7 left, 9, 14 right)
Rooney, *Architectural Ornamentation in Chicago*
(pp. cover left, 5 top and bottom right, 11 bottom)
Stamper, *Chicago's North Michigan Avenue*
(pp. cover right, 3 top, 7 right, 8, 10, 16, 18, 20, 21)

McGraw-Hill Building, Chicago



Thielbar & Fugard, Architects

Dilks Construction Company

160 North La Salle Street

Chicago

An advertisement from *Handbook for Architects and Builders* (1929).

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

Peter C. B. Bynoe, Chairman
Joseph A. Gonzalez, Vice Chairman
Thomas E. Gray, Secretary
John W. Baird
Kein L. Burton
Marian Despres
Albert M. Friedman
Valerie B. Jarrett
Seymour Persky

320 N. Clark St., Room 516, Chicago, IL 60610
312-744-3200; 744-2958 (TDD)